

Ready?

Fiery idealist that he was, John jumped immediately from the first sign of the wedding wine to a dramatic encounter at the temple in Jerusalem between Jesus and the religious robbers.

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.” (v13, 14)

The system allowed for the sale of these religious items as part of the officially sanctioned worship. It all started off probably quite innocently but by this time, the pilgrims were pretty much being pillaged by these pious pirates. On top of that, it was the religious officialdom that ultimately benefited from these sales and exchanges of coin.

But it's not too different today. No, I'm not referring to the Christian Booksellers or recording artists et al (though you could really get me going on that point). Rather, we find far too many ministers who are simply employed – doing what they do because they like 'Christian employment' rather than obeying a calling from God. Thank the Lord for the many who are genuine in their service!!

“When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a

house of merchandise!” (v15, 16)

Jesus wasn't perturbed at the sale so much as the locale – His Father's house. On a second round a few years later, He did the same thing and said, *“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.”* (Mat 21:15)

This radical cleansing impressed John as well as the other Gospel writers. It seems he was ready for a 'fire-brand' Messiah. He was a 'son of thunder' (Mark 3:17) and he was ready for a religious storm. John was zealous for the things of God or so he thought. He was ready for some zeal. Holy scriptures pertaining to such passion were easy for him to recall and believe.

“Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.” (v 17) Christ's holy attitude struck a cord with John. It was the kind of thing that the Baptist would have done. But something was about to transpire that he wasn't ready for.

“So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’” (v 18) 'Oh boy, another sign!', John may have been thinking.

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

“Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’” (v 19, 20)

John wasn't ready for this. What was Jesus saying? This conundrum stuck in his mind for years and it may even have been a 'hard saying' for him. The water into wine sign led him to believe in Jesus as the

Messiah, but he may have really struggled with this one. He wasn't ready for it.

And it is the same for us today. I submit that most of us come to faith in Christ not being ready for all He has to say. There are verses in the Bible which pose contradictions to our desires or experience or rationale. Consequently, we try to interpret them to fit our vision or we simply put them in the 'not sure about this one' bucket. Many times it's not because we don't want to believe it; we're just not ready to believe.

Jesus never explained this saying to his disciples privately like He did the parables though He did tell them later that He had to die and be resurrected. But even then, they didn't get it. It may have been just too big a pill to swallow.

“But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” (v 21)

This was the revelation that explained it all. Keep in mind, John wrote this retrospectively. At the time, he was as clueless or faithless as everyone else. He had to go through some things first before he could understand and/or believe this saying.

“Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.” (v 22)

Remember, the Gospel of John is one large lesson on believing. In this segment between signs, he is teaching us that it is critical to believe not only in Jesus as Christ but to believe all that He has said for the two beliefs are usually

segregated in the minds of believers. Additionally, he is teaching us that we are sometimes not ready to believe all that He's said and this can create a dilemma. It wasn't until after the resurrection that John believed the scripture and the saying of Jesus. In like manner, many of us struggle with portions of the Bible – we shouldn't, but we do. For example, there are some who will not believe in the literal second coming of Christ until after the fact.

Now, a 'ready mind' is one that is taught of the Holy Spirit and knows that the Word of God is true whether or not it compliments our understanding. Such a mind is willing to believe. You see, there are some things that He has said that we're often just not ready to 'digest'. But we should never abandon what we do know and believe for what we don't understand or struggle with. We must remain willing to believe, for in due season, when we are ready to believe and/or understand, like John, we will look back and say, "Wow, now I get it!"

At the foot of the cross, John still didn't get it and it was a dark, dark day. But in the empty tomb only a few days later, it all became much clearer.

You can believe ALL that Jesus said, ALL the scriptures, with absolute confidence. If some things are still a mystery or 'rub' you or humble you or are contrary to your natural thinking – hold on. Remain a ready (willing to believe) mind. You won't be disappointed. The Holy Spirit never said, "Oops". You can trust Him. You can believe ALL that He's said.